

Session Name: Government-wide survey and more - taking action:

Featured Speaker: Heather Case and Lee Ellis

Presentation Summary:

During the summer of 1999, EPA participated in a government-wide survey with 29 other federal government organizations to set a baseline for the American Customer Satisfaction Index. The President's Management Council sponsored the surveys. EPA selected Reference Librarians Using Internet as its surrogate customer segment for the American public using Internet to fill environmental information needs. Libraries provide direct, unbiased service to a broad spectrum of the American people across the country and are available to individuals regardless of age, social status, or educational background. In 1996 public library reference requests were 284,513,000 or 1.1/ person. Internet information represents all EPA programs, and increased public access is a strategic goal of EPA. Today, half of the public has access to computers for personal use; less than 5 years ago 30% did, so it is clear that Internet will be the preferred way to obtain information in the future.

CEIS piggy-backed a series of questions onto the overall survey focusing on specific types of information that the librarians might have attempted to locate on Internet. (See the speaker's slide presentation on the following pages.)

Results:

High Interest/Low Interest Topics

Out of the twelve topics tested:

- more than 50% of the librarians had sought information on hazardous waste, air pollution, drinking water safety, water pollution, and endangered species;
- less than a third had sought information on health statistics or secondhand smoke

Good News: Satisfaction & Web Navigation

Out of the 12 topics tested:

- Approximately 20% librarians were dissatisfied with the information they had obtained on industrial compliance or health statistics;
- Only 10% or less indicated they were dissatisfied with information on the other topics.

Web site contains info that is of pretty high interest to customers—perhaps we need to provide links to other sites that will give more info on topics like health statistics and endangered species. Suggestion: don't show that links are "links" might turn people off. (This goes against our Agency protocols.)
Need to communicate and share what we do so – need to make our info more accessible

Important Ideas from the Discussion:

- EPA should provide links to other sites on our main page.
- Also, it is important to do performance testing vs. preference testing on website. It is more important to figure out what our users need/use than their ascetic preferences.

Key Questions of the Speaker:

Q: Why did they let us pick our own questions?

R: They didn't--we picked our own topics and were provided with general questions that everyone used. Of course, we modified them slightly to meet our needs.

Comment: Someone searching EPA's website for information on bottled water received a very detailed response back w/in five days. That person was extremely satisfied with our service and thought we were doing an excellent job. She suggested we get the word out more.

Comment: One long time user, who uses website everyday, said the biggest problem he has encountered on our site is that many of the program office's main pages are not current and contain outdated and/or obsolete information.

How can EPA use this information?

- Data will help us to improve our website and make it more user friendly
- Make sure the types of data users want is accessible
- Make sure our data is accurate and easy to get to
- Use the info to build better products

- where to get information. Also, we need to set standards on website layout and design.
- We should have search engines and magazines link to us from their websites.
 - Need content driven sites, search tools, customer segments, guidance and policies online, tools for managing sites, geographic information; data gap fixes and data quality improvement; de-bureaucratize (remove organizational labels); listen to customers!

Comments process: how do we deal with all the comments we receive on the web?

- Need to develop lotus notes database that will take in comments from the web and categorize them. The comments will be collected by an editor who will forward them to an expert in the field to respond. The expert can either send the response back to the editor or directly to the customer. All responses will be recorded and maintained in the database with extensive search capabilities.

Where in EPA can this information be used?

This information will be used primarily by EPA's Office of Environmental Information. However, anyone responsible for designing or maintaining a website could benefit from the results of the survey.

Any commitments to follow-up action at EPA:

EPA will use the results of the survey to improve its website.

List of participants: no list

Recorder Name/telephone number/fax/e-mail: